

**Chaire “Ganshof van der Meersch” 2009
Institut d’Etudes Européennes, ULB
Fondation Wiener Anspach**

EUTOPIA

On the Idea and Practice of Europe as a Model

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Overall course description

Do as Romans do? From every corner of the globe, Brussels is proclaimed as the new lighthouse of civilized relations between countries. But ours is a post-modern Rome, one not bent on imposing its rules, rulings, norms or values through conquest and domination but bent on spreading them through inspiration and persuasion. And therefore, do as Romans do ought to be our motto ... when in Rome, or when elsewhere.

So we are told. In recent years, the idea of “Europe as a model for the rest of the world” - where Europe of course stands for the European Union (EU)- has become highly fashionable in policy and academic circles alike. The Union may seek to become an “actor” on the international stage but not any old actor. With increasing rhetorical explicitness, its elected, appointed or self-anointed representatives have developed a powerful message: it is not (only) about what we do, it is about who we are. The EU’s own internal success offers valuable lessons for the rest of the world. In the last half century, we have invented and fine-tuned a supra-national system of governance, based on the values of freedom, human rights, the rule of law and democracy which has brought peace and prosperity to a once war-torn continent. Isn’t it worth replicating such an achievement beyond our borders? The process we have followed can serve as a roadmap to others: incrementalism built on a spill-over logic, economic integration as a vehicle to achieve political ends, intergovernmental bargaining serviced by supranational institutions. Since the wider world is “in need of more and better governance” it should help itself liberally to our model. Whether as an object of liberal inspiration or slavish emulation, the EU’s *raison d’être* on the international scene centres on the relevance of its *être* itself.

The argument, however, does not stop here. While the idea of model is generally associated with the passive, the painter’s or engineer’s *object* of translation from one medium to another, this story is not about models as opposed to actors, but about an *acting* model. The EU they are talking about is proactive, a teacher, a preacher, a partner. Its mission *as a model*, must be to invest in globalizing the kind of regional order it has created within. And here, the practice reflects the vision in drawing a number of concentric circles emanating from the core “model”. Closest to home, it is fair to say that the EU has successfully shaped the new member states in Central and Eastern Europe in its own image and is seeking to do the same with countries and regions in its direct neighbourhood in South East Europe and across the Mediterranean. Further on, the Union is increasingly involved in teaching its lessons of regional integration and institutionalization to other groups of countries in the developing world, of which recent negotiations between the EU and African sub-regions for Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are the most notorious example. At the global level, the EU has actively sought to shape the global governance institutions along its own lines, be it in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) or international environmental negotiations. Hence, the practice of promoting the EU as a model has been felt in many parts of the world in recent years.

So what should we think about the idea and practice of “Europe as a model”? Is this a good idea? Is this a right idea? What do Europeans really mean by “model”? Are we talking about the EU’s transnational, liberal, democratic or social character? And have EU institutions been successful in promoting some version of this model? How does the rest of the world perceive and respond to this narrative? The course proposes to address these questions, and in the process to critically assess the parameters of the debate in an interdisciplinary perspective.

Following Lectures:

- 1. March 24, (10h, IEE-ULB): “What do we mean by the EU as a model? (Overview)**
 - a. “Standards of civilisation, clash of civilisations and the claim to normative power”**
 - b. “National treatment, harmonisation, mutual recognition? The single market beyond its borders”**
- 2. March 26 (14h): “A Kantian World? The EU as a promoter of the rule of law, democracy and human rights”**
- 3. March 27 (16h, IEE-ULB): “Convergence, emulation and promotion? The EU as a model for regional integration”**
- 4. April 28 (16h, IEE-ULB): “Constitutionalism, microcosmos, tool-kit? The EU as a model for global governance”**